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Allan Ramsay and Edinburgh: Commemoration in the City of Forgetting

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Allan Ramsay and Edinburgh: Commemoration in the City of Forgetting

Abstract

This article is a study of the memorials concerning the poet Allan Ramsay in Edinburgh. Ramsay, best known for his pastoral drama *The Gentle Shepherd*, has been largely neglected, or ‘forgotten’, in Edinburgh’s nineteenth-century project of memorialisation. The Ramsay Monument in West Princes Street Gardens by John Steell is the rare exception. In order to understand the effect of this and other memorials I have examined bibliographical and periodical sources and set these against the longer tradition of commemorating Ramsay in the Pentlands area which we might call ‘Gentle Shepherd Country’. I have also incorporated theories from memory studies, especially those particular to the study of memorials and ‘cultural memory’. Finally, it will be shown that the late nineteenth-century fashion for medieval nostalgia and the very recent turn towards celebrating Robert Louis Stevenson during large scale UNESCO events have superseded the age of the Scottish Enlightenment with new ‘images’ of Edinburgh.

Allan Ramsay (1684–1758) was one of the most significant players in Edinburgh’s cultural development. While his role in the Scottish Enlightenment is becoming central to recent scholarship, questions over his memory remain. In working through these questions we encounter overlaps: (a) the activities of Ramsay during his time in Edinburgh; (b) the history of Edinburgh during that time; and (c) the presence of Ramsay in Edinburgh after his death, ie. his *afterlife*. To handle the potential instability of these narratives when brought together I will introduce certain theories of cultural memory that serve to underpin case studies such as these. Doing this helps us review exactly who, or what, is remembered in Edinburgh.

The majority of this paper will focus on the nineteenth century and the

rise of commemorative activity rather than the age of Enlightenment in which Ramsay worked. Few figures of the Scottish Enlightenment tick as many boxes as Ramsay in the check-list of ‘enlightened’ activity. He was the founder of the first circulating library in Britain (1726); a founding member of St. Luke’s Academy (Britain’s first art school, 1729); founder of the first purpose-built theatre in Edinburgh (Carrubber’s Close, 1739); and (often founding) member of several social clubs.¹ Yet we find only a handful of markers by which to remember Ramsay. In Burns’s ‘Address’ to the city – ‘Wild beats my heart to trace your steps thro’ hostile ranks and ruin’d gaps’ – we glimpse a civic space crammed with history. This is the same image of the city we have today. However, for all the impressions of history lying in wait, Edinburgh is also a city of forgetting.

How do cities, themselves, forget? This question opens up a space for cultural memory and the theories that serve to explain the processes that take place in forming the ‘image’ or ‘character’ of a ‘space’ such as Edinburgh. The growth of ‘cultural memory’ and the field of memory studies more generally has been encouraged in no small part through new considerations of major figures in Scottish Literature. Both Burns and Scott have been re-examined in terms of memory.² In a time when the impact of research and Knowledge Exchange direct the future of scholarship it is no surprise that the legacies of major writers are being revised. In this digital age, technologies evolve quickly, perhaps too fast for our scholarly hardwiring: blogs are left unfinished and project websites with claims of permanence and pre-eminence become outdated, despite the wealth of material on offer.³ At the time of writing, there is no mobile app for Allan Ramsay as there is for Burns, but who is to say there might not be one as soon as next year, rendering all conclusions on Ramsay as Scotland’s ‘forgotten poet’ inaccurate?⁴

In *Memory in Culture* (2011) Astrid Erll refers to ‘collective texts’: literatures which act as a point of access or as a ‘medium’ of cultural memory. Among those named are *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Waverley* (1814), and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929). These examples are especially potent for being communicative of other media and mnemonic markers that compliment (and sometimes supersede) the relevant text. In other words, Jane Austen’s novel may well inspire thoughts on the story of the Bennetts in the Longbourne estate but it could equally, even primarily, conjure the scenes acted out by Keira Knightley in the popular cinematic adaptation of 2005. The word *Waverley* inspires a set of images and histories, often tartan-

clad, leading us back to Edinburgh. Indeed, the process of naming Waverley railway station in the mid-to-late nineteenth century is a crucial example of the commemorative age that re-shaped Edinburgh in the wake of the Enlightenment.⁵ In this process the city is presenting itself by taking stock of its past selectively: unwanted histories are lost in the shadows of new statues and monuments. There is perhaps no better example of the latter in Edinburgh than the Scott Monument (completed 1844/46).⁶ The literary connotations of this gothic pile and the nearby railway station were effective in developing the ‘image’ of Edinburgh as a clean, bright, and inviting city, especially when compared to the grimy, industrial, and comparatively uninviting Glasgow. This exact contrast was depicted on the ‘Scotland’ card issued by the Arbuckle Coffee Company in 1889.⁷ As reductive as the card may seem, neglecting all of Scotland outside its two largest cities, it does reveal the consolidation of the image of Edinburgh following a tumultuous period of reconstruction begun in the previous century and lasting almost eighty years. One small coffee card is a snapshot of Edinburgh’s cultural memory.

The study of cities in literature is not new. Pike’s *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981) and Lehan’s *The City in Literature* (1998) set up the idea generally before more recent scholarship saw the value of cultural memory as a theoretical anchor. Specific cities such as Athens (Loraux 2006), Venice (Fenlon, 2007), and Prague (Thomas, 2010) have been re-examined as such, with the word ‘memory’ featuring in the title. More recently the term ‘city-scaping’ has been used to describe ‘the process through which an image of a city or an urban landscape is imaginatively reconstructed.’⁸ From here discussions might commence on the perceived masculinity of Glasgow, an ‘image’ constructed through the bustling years of shipbuilding and the determined ‘hard-man’ stereotype found in razor-gang novels.⁹ Edinburgh, on the other hand, has somehow retained a richer historical image, reminiscent of the age in which Ramsay, Fergusson, and Burns lived. But how did it occur, and to what extent can we find these figures in the city?

COMMEMORATIONS OF RAMSAY IN EDINBURGH

The first place we ‘find’ Ramsay in Edinburgh is his home near the Castle. Built in the early-eighteenth century, Ramsay refers to the house as ‘my

villa' in a letter to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik in 1740.¹⁰ It still stands, forming part of the larger apartment complex in what is now named Ramsay Gardens – an important touchstone of Ramsay's afterlife in Edinburgh. For a pictorial representation of the affectionately-named 'Goosepie' (as it was in Ramsay's day) the frontispiece illustration to the London edition of *The Works of Allan Ramsay* (1848) and two paintings (Thomas Clark, watercolour 1871; Grace Forbes, oil 1889) offer a variety of views. In the 1890s, Patrick Geddes lived in Ramsay Gardens and had the additional apartments built in the midst of his renovation projects. Before the decade was out, the development around Ramsay's home was complete. In an article in *The Academy* the writer laments the loss of the Luckenbooths, demolished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the more recent loss of 'the separate identity' of the Goosepie. Even more than the fall of Ramsay's Old Town shops and howffs, Geddes's incorporation of Ramsay's home into a larger complex is said to have been 'the most severe blow' to Ramsay's memory.¹¹ In other words, the authenticity of the site as a touchstone of memory related to Ramsay was impaired when it became more than just the Goosepie. A new layer of memory had been added.

We may go even further and reconsider the illustrations of the original villa. An attempt was clearly made to portray Ramsay's home as something of a pastoral idyll by the Castle: a country retreat sitting above the ancient High Street and removed from its historical connotations. The popularity of *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), set in the Pentlands, would have certainly inspired this notion, but to this text we will return later. Besides the Luckenbooths, where Ramsay had his shop and circulating library, were additional shops from which he worked and traded. One in particular was located in the High Street between 1718 and 1722.¹² The building was demolished in 1899 along with scores of historical buildings and their associated cultural memories. A survey in 1901 showed that in the short space of forty years two-thirds of the ancient buildings in the Old Town had been demolished.¹³ In that turbulent period artists were capturing the condemned buildings and Ramsay's High Street shop was an obvious focus. Figure 1 shows Ramsay's shop (at the open window in the shortest of the buildings), where a commemorative plaque was fixed until the building was demolished at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴

With Ramsay's extant Castlehill home adapted beyond recognition and

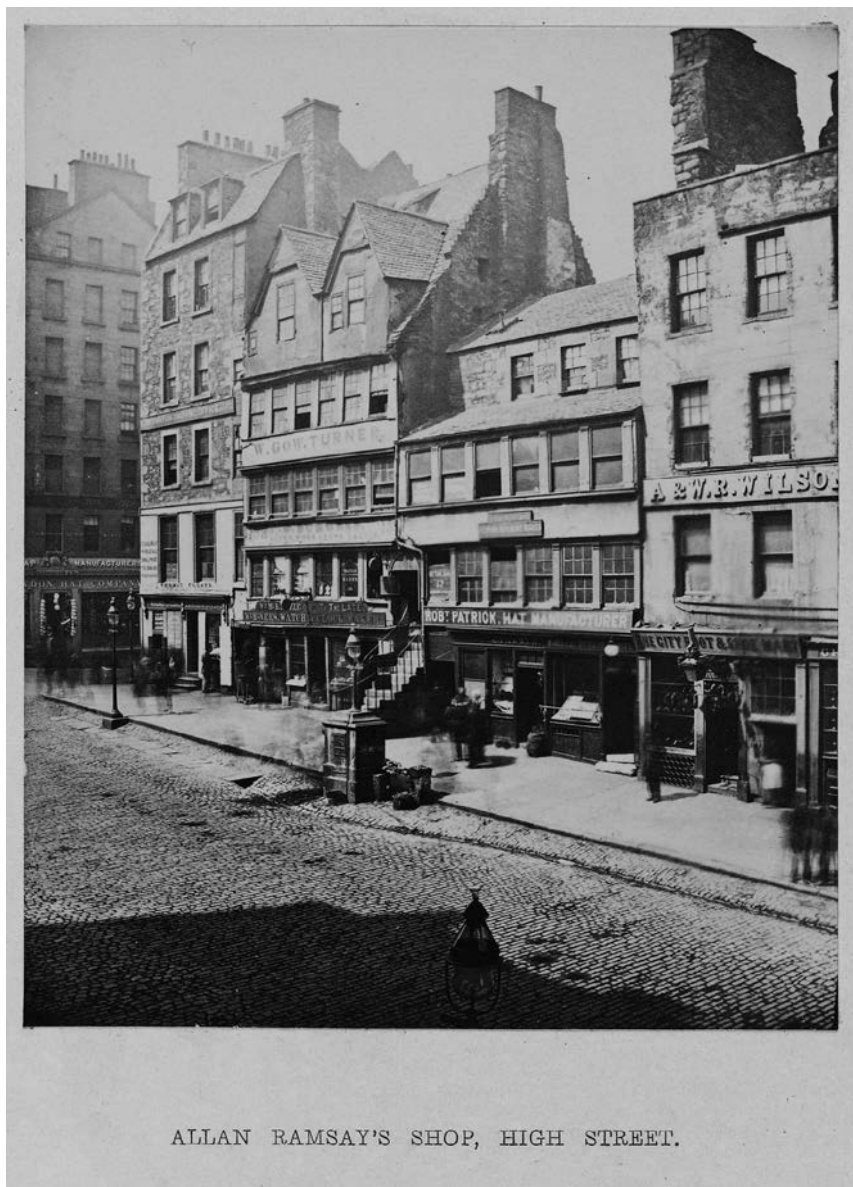


FIG. 1: Archibald Burns, *Allan Ramsay's shop*, High Street (1868) photograph: www.capitalcollections.org.uk, Edinburgh Museums.

his shops long gone it is fair to say that the surviving architecture in Edinburgh's Old Town does little towards retaining his cultural memory today. Indeed, distinctions must be made between the honorary naming of residential areas such as Ramsay Gardens (where no-one goes to learn about Ramsay) and the active, tourist-attracting locations nearby such as John Knox's House or Mary King's Close. These are 'active' in the sense that more information on the named person can be gained when the site is visited, whether in the form of a tour or a museum experience. Julia Thomas's *Shakespeare's Shrine* (2012) asserts that the ambiguity of authenticity does not detract from the usefulness of birthplaces in the process of immortalisation. In Scotland, Robert Burns's birthplace and nearby museum are central to the development of Burns tourism. With Ramsay there is no such 'birthplace' or 'workplace' site left to visit.

It is left to review the monuments and statues dedicated to Ramsay in and out of Edinburgh to determine the motive, success, and longevity of his cultural memory in the city. The successful Robert Burns Beyond Text project, which produced an online database of monuments and statues related to Burns around the globe, exemplifies the ways in which cultural memory is formed and retained throughout time in the public domain.¹⁵ Ramsay, far from having the global reach of Burns, can be located more or less in Edinburgh. But to what extent does the city truly remember him? He died on 7 January 1758 and was buried in Greyfriars Kirkyard two days later. As the inaugural UNESCO City of Literature (2004) Edinburgh has done much in the past decade to promote its literary heritage, sometimes taking stock of Ramsay and his successors. In their (aptly titled) website 'A City of Remembrance and Inspiration' the oft-repeated notion that Edinburgh's 'history is steeped in literary associations' is backed up with a review of the city's graveyards. Ramsay is found in the eternal company of William Creech and William Smellie both of whose associations with Burns are well known.¹⁶ Walking through Greyfriars today you will find the monument for Ramsay. It reads:

In this Cemetery
Was Interred the Mortal Part
of an Immortal Poet.
ALLAN RAMSAY.
Author of the GENTLE SHEPHERD.

And other admirable Poems in the Scottish Dialect.

He was Born in 1686, and Died in 1758.

No sculptured marble here, nor pompous lay,
No storied Urn nor animated Bust
This simple Stone directs pale SCOTIA's way,
To pour her sorrows o'er the Poet's dust.

Tho' here you're buried, worthy ALLAN,
We'll ne'er forget you, canty Callan;
For while your Soul lives in the Sky
Your GENTLE SHEPHERD ne'er can die.

At face value this is a worthy memorial, typical in its honorary tone. In reality it is a confabulation of three literary figures: Burns, Fergusson, and Ramsay himself. The first rhyming verse is in fact recycled from Burns's epitaph to Fergusson, who was buried in an unmarked grave in nearby Canongate kirkyard in 1774. The same verse, which adorns the headstone encouraged by Burns during his time in Edinburgh in 1787, therefore remembers both Ramsay *and* Fergusson.¹⁷ The second verse, following Burns's elegiac tone but not his rhyme scheme, was composed for Ramsay when the monument plaque was put in place in the early nineteenth century.¹⁸ While Ramsay is well known as the chief architect in the revival of vernacular poetry, the term 'Poems in the Scottish Dialect' in this context arguably relies on the title of Burns's famous books. Rather than position Ramsay as the father-figure of the triumvirate he is arguably lost behind these other cultural memories.

The power of these mnemonic symbols should not be downplayed. After all, Edinburgh is known for the survival of old rituals and the public interaction with monuments such as spitting on the Heart of Midlothian or rubbing the big toe of David Hume.¹⁹ There have even been calls to prevent visitors from touching the nose of Greyfriars Bobby.²⁰ Indeed, while kirkyards can offer a touchstone of memory there is the inevitable issue of placement, size, maintenance, and religious context. Unlike the civic space proper, where statues signify something of a local or national interest, kirkyards offer something different. In the Glasgow Necropolis politicians,

poets, and religious reformers are enshrined with monuments of different sizes. But, while it is open to the public, the very name ('city of the dead') encourages respect and quiet reflection. Statues on a main road or square may be seen more often but they lack the same implied serenity of a burial ground. This speaks to the plurality of memories which compete for attention in a public space without the advantage of a label in a museum. This is the case with Edinburgh's chief memorial: the Scott Monument. Finished in 1844/46 by George Meikle Kemp, the 60-metre monument is one of the most recognisable on the Edinburgh skyline. On the west side of the Scott Monument, facing north, is the head of Allan Ramsay. James V, Byron, and Fergusson are also represented, and above are more historical figures such as Robert the Bruce, this time in the company of fictional characters from Scott's novels. In all, the Scott Monument is a crowning achievement in an age of memory giants; an age we can track in line with the city Improvement Acts (1827; 1867) which saw city planners fashion an image of Edinburgh that would retain a distinguished afterglow of Enlightenment.²¹ Ironically, large swathes of the Enlightenment were forgotten in the process. A. J. Youngson's *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (1966; 1988) details the hive of activity in the capital during the 1820s which saw the commencement of Scotland's controversial National Monument. Whatever the public feeling around Scotland's (abandoned) National Monument in the style of the Parthenon, the construction of an 'Athens of the North' comprising the Nelson Monument (1816) and the Dugald Stewart Monument (1831) alongside seems to have succeeded in implying Edinburgh's historicity.²²

Ramsay waited a long time to be part of these commemorations. It was not until the Allan Ramsay Monument by John Steell was unveiled on 25 March 1865 that the poet's cultural memory in Edinburgh was bolstered. It can be found in West Princes Street Gardens only a short walk from, and in line with, the towering Scott Monument. Viewed from the pavement Ramsay Gardens can be seen as the backdrop [Figure 2].

A statue of John Wilson ('Christopher North') was also unveiled on the same day. As the *Caledonian Mercury* of 18 September 1863 suggests, Ramsay was being worked into a new triumvirate – Ramsay, Scott, Wilson – of Edinburgh literati, topped off with 'the splendid block of buildings comprising the Royal Institute and the National Gallery.' But in the days before the new Ramsay statue was unveiled the public were reminded of 'the delay

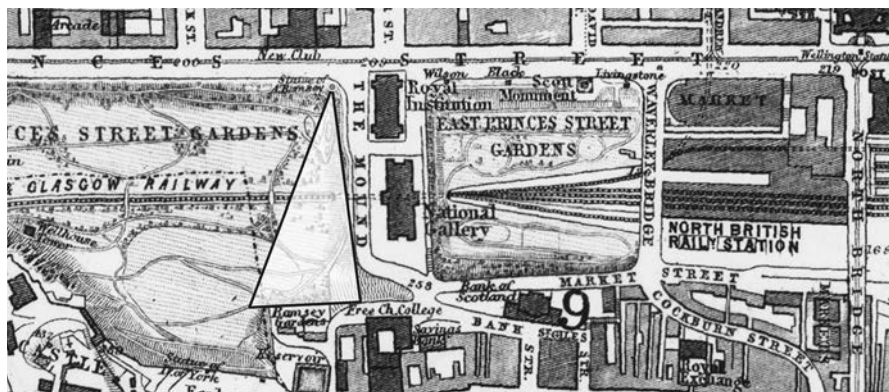


FIG. 2: From John Bartholomew's *Plan of Edinburgh and Leith with Suburbs Constructed for the Post Office Directory* (1882), courtesy of the National Library of Scotland, with overlaid annotations. Monument and perspective of Ramsay Gardens highlighted. Note the Wilson and Scott monuments to the east of the Mound.

being caused by the giving way of the embankment behind Ramsay Lodge, where the statue was at first intended to be placed.²³ The landslip had occurred at the beginning of March 1860, ultimately preventing the Steell monument from ending up in front of Ramsay's home.²⁴ It is easy to imagine the locale around Castlehill having more cultural grounding had this happened, but it is also arguable that in the busier public area of Princes Street Gardens the statue receives more attention. As the same number of the *Caledonian Mercury* that looked forward to the new cultural hotspot 'in line with the Scott Monument' boasts [emphases added]:

No position more suitable could have been selected for these national memorials. Its *centrality* is its chief recommendation. The statues will stand in the *midst of the city* [. . .] and they will *recall* their fame to generations whose boast is that they belong to the same country. At the same time there is an appropriateness in these monuments being placed in situations which, *amid the bustle* and roar of city life, recall, however feebly, the trees and flowers and meadows *which they so loved* and frequented, so wrote and spoke of then they were more than memories.²⁵

The language here is indicative of the age of commemoration. Even more

so, it suggests a wholehearted belief in the longevity of these monuments as befitting not just Ramsay and Wilson ('their fame') but also their rustic locale ('the trees and flowers and meadows which they so loved and frequented'). We might also note here the presumed seamlessness of their eras. Wilson represents a literary and historical age almost a full century after Ramsay's. He had only been dead for nine years whereas Ramsay had been dead for over one hundred (See Table 1, below). A compression of time has been enacted: the Steell statues of Ramsay and Wilson are said to recall the romantic subjects of their respective writings because they reside in the same park. This attempt to unify the *oeuvre* of disparate poets in a suitable space is symptomatic of Edinburgh's forgetfulness.

It would be tempting to consider the whole as a 'site of memory', but it is important to make some distinctions. Borrowing from Pierre Nora's seminal *lieux de mémoire*, Jay Winter narrowed the term 'site of memory' to mean 'physical sites where commemorative acts take place.' In Edinburgh, the Castle is the most obvious site: gun salutes ring in specific occasions such as New Year's or royal birthdays. In the nineteenth century many of the new monuments were seemingly purpose-built. Devoid of associations with religion or war, no 'commemorative acts' were required. Winter's terms fit more comfortably with the twentieth-century in the wake of World War II.²⁶ Effectively this is 'collective memory', a foundational notion in memory studies first used by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1940s and 50s. As a public touchstone which may go unnoticed for years, Ramsay's monument reminds us of the instability of the term 'collective memory'. As Irwin-Zarecka reminds us, the 'adaptability of collective memory' can lead to its overuse, ignoring the subtleties between private and public modes of remembrance that are difficult, if not impossible, to record.²⁷ With no way of saying how Ramsay's monument impacts people's memories today, its dormancy can be seen as part of a long-term, cultural memory.²⁸

The final example in Edinburgh recasts Ramsay in the modern age. Usher Hall on Lothian Road was opened in March 1914, featuring plaster roundels embedded in wall panels by the artist Harry Gamley. In amongst the famous Scots, in rows of three, are: Scott, Stevenson, Burns; Hogg, Ramsay, Tannahill; James I, Barbour, Ossian; Neil Gow, Lady Nairne, and Fergusson. It is tempting to read a ranking system at play, with Scott and Burns being obvious picks for the top row. As for Stevenson, much more will be said regarding his place in the formation of Edinburgh's 'character'

later. But Ramsay's presence here is no surprise. At a national level – for this is by no means a memorial to local literature – he had become increasingly popular at the turn of the twentieth century. By 1900 Ramsay was counted alongside other 'heroes' of Scotland (in the frieze in the Great Hall of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery and in the Valhalla of the Wallace Monument in Stirling).²⁹ This follows the publication of the *Allan Ramsay* number of the *Famous Scot Series* (1896–1905) of biographies published by Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier. Published after the Thomas Carlyle number, Ramsay's treatment in the series (Hugh Miller, Knox, and Burns follow) suggest a rejuvenated position and a promotion of sorts from his gargoyle-like place on the Scott Monument in 1844. He was no longer regarded as a minor precursor to Burns and Scott, but rather as a significant role model.

Indeed, correlating the activity of publishers and public commemorations helps determine the cultural memory of Allan Ramsay more precisely. Burns Martin's *Bibliography* of Ramsay (1931) remains the standard treatment. It shows a pronounced increase in the production of Ramsay's most published work, *The Gentle Shepherd*, following his death in 1758. By 1800 forty-seven more editions were printed with the largest lacuna being four years (no editions found 1764–67).³⁰ Much larger gaps appear between editions of Ramsay's other major works following his death: *The Ever Green* (1824; 1874), *Proverbs* (1834; 1888), and *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1794; 1871). In the years following the unveiling of the Ramsay Monument in Princes Street Gardens there were some notable new editions of his work. In 1871 *The Tea-Table Miscellany* was printed in Glasgow by John Crum, being the first for seventy-seven years. Two editions of *The Gentle Shepherd* were printed the very year the statue was unveiled: the first (Martin, 331) by William Forrester in Edinburgh 'On the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Statue of the Poet' complete with a reprint of David Allan's original illustrations; the second (Martin, 332) by Adam and Charles Black, also in Edinburgh, being a reprint of their last effort in 1856 and thus rivalling Forrester's new 'official' edition. The Blacks went one better in 1867, producing yet another *Gentle Shepherd* (Martin, 334) with a new preface and a photograph of the Ramsay monument.³¹ While it is impossible to chart the actual impact of the Monument on Ramsay's readers, this head-to-head between Edinburgh publishers in a bid to 'claim' Ramsay reveals a renewed interest in his works. It is even more intriguing to consider that Ramsay's *Poems*, published as recently as 1859, were published again 'as a subscription

issue in 23 parts between 1866–68' in London and New York (Martin, 335). For a brief spell, the city had 'remembered' him, but how long did it last?

COMPARATIVE COMMEMORATIONS

Edinburgh had invoked a meaningful cultural memory of Ramsay in the form of the Steell Monument, creating a flurry of literary and commemorative activity beyond its boundaries into the early twentieth century. It is crucial to ask why this tailed off again. But before comparisons are drawn between Ramsay and other figures in Edinburgh we should consider whether or not there was a 'Gentle Shepherd Country'. That *The Gentle Shepherd* was and remains Ramsay's most popular work is without doubt. It is therefore not surprising that the setting of the drama should play host to other cultural memories. After all it was in the area surrounding the Pentland Hills (ie. Carlops, Penicuik), not Edinburgh, where Ramsay set his play.

One year after Ramsay's death a stone obelisk was erected to his memory by Sir James Clerk of Penicuik near Penicuik House. Sir James's father, Sir John, was friends with Ramsay and allegedly offered him safe landing in the area during the Jacobite occupation of Edinburgh in the autumn of 1745.³² In the *Lives of Eminent Scotsmen* (1821) a second monument is mentioned but has apparently not survived: 'The late ingenious Lord Woodhouselee has, also, erected near the supposed scene of the Gentle Shepherd, a rustic temple, which is thus elegantly dedicated to the memory of the poet.'³³ Outside the cityscape this area becomes something of a tourist hotspot, closer to the term 'site of memory' than the Scott Monument or the Ramsay Monument by Steell. This was supplemented by a 1788 edition of the play by Andrew Foulis the younger, heir to the celebrated Glasgow publishers Robert and Andrew Foulis. The celebrated edition boasted a frontispiece portrait, twelve aquatint plates, and nine leaves of engraved music to accompany the narrative by David Allan.³⁴ In an advertisement for the book a continual thread of memory is formed between Ramsay's day and the present: 'This piece, it is well known, he composed in the neighbourhood of the Pentland Hills, a few miles from Edinburgh, where the Shepherds to this day sing his songs, and the old people remember him

reciting his own verses.³⁵ We cannot assume the reliability of this claim but the effort to connect Ramsay to the locale through his most famous work is formidable. It was so formidable, in fact, that in 1792 the Allan Ramsay Hotel was established in Carlops. It still stands, and plays host to the Allan Ramsay Festival inaugurated in October 2016.

Throughout the nineteenth century the desire to remember Ramsay in the area remained strong. In the months between April and July of 1810 the *Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany* printed articles which suggest as much. ‘J. McD’ said: ‘Burns, Thomson, and others of our ingenious countrymen, have received every mark of public approbation, while our “famous Allan” has received no honour.’ An essay then appears ‘On the Proposal to erect a Monument to Ramsay’, fixating on a site ‘near the banks of the classical Esk above Roslin, in the midst of the coinciding and genuine originals of his pastoral, where he resided.’³⁶ That locals were disputing the authenticity of the spots literally described in *The Gentle Shepherd* reveals an urgency to properly commemorate the poet and a dissatisfaction with previous efforts. Harald Hendrix reminds us that the association of literature and tourism, albeit an ‘ancient’ cultural practice, reached new heights in nineteenth-century Britain.³⁷ Romantic sentimentalism became commonplace: it was noted in the papers that the ‘picknickers and tourists’ in Carlops ‘choose to hold solitary tryst with the spirit of Ramsay’s ‘landwart sang’ at the top of Loganlea pond. . .’³⁸ As late in the century as 1891 ‘a comparative silence’ surrounding Ramsay was bemoaned. It was claimed that, in the Pentlands at least, Ramsay remained a household name and *The Gentle Shepherd* was ‘still universally read and relished by the people whose habits and manners are therein described.’³⁹ This was perhaps due in no small part to the seasonal performances of the play taking place in Penicuik, for example, in the Friendly Society’s Hall and, later, the Town Hall.⁴⁰ Although less tangible than a monument with co-ordinates on a map, the oral and folk culture in the Pentlands perpetrated the memory of Ramsay naturally and matched, even rivalled, Edinburgh’s claim to his legacy. In Ann Rigney’s work on the memory of Walter Scott she reminds us that ‘communities come into existence together with the stories about their emergence’ and that identity plays a large part in the formation of cultural memory.⁴¹ It might be suggested that the folk identity attached to Ramsay has waned significantly in Edinburgh while it lingers on in places like Penicuik and Carlops. One of the chief reasons for this is the emer-

gence of new cultural memories which compete in cities. In a city there is a constant flux of symbols and markers: architecture, advertising, street patterns. People carry even more symbols in their multitude. Rural settings rarely have this problem. Things do change, sometimes starkly, but generally speaking the countryside can retain cultural memory for longer.

It is now left to review the other figures who form part of the cultural memory of Edinburgh, feeding its reputation as a historical and literary city. Table 1 represents a selection of statues and memorials found in Edinburgh in the nineteenth century, offering a breakdown of the interim years between the death of the person memorialised (if applicable) and the date of the completion or unveiling of the memorial.

<i>Monument Subject</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Death of Subject</i>	<i>Interim Years</i>
Horatio Nelson	1816	1805	9
Henry Dundas (Melville)	1828	1811	17
National Monument	1829	N/A	N/A
Dugald Stewart	1831	1828	3
King George IV	1831	1830	1
William Pitt	1833	1806	27
Robert Burns	1839	1796	43
Victoria	1844	1901	N/A
Walter Scott	1844/46	1832	12/14
Allan Ramsay	1865	1758	107
John Wilson	1865	1854	11
Greyfriars Bobby	1872	1872	N/A
David Livingstone	1876	1873	3
Adam Black	1877	1874	3
James Young Wilson	1877	1870	7

Table 1: *Select list of public statues in Edinburgh erected in the nineteenth century*^{A2}

Excluding Burns (who was already ‘immortal’) Ramsay’s century-long wait seems starkly disparate in this list. Yet, David Hume and Adam Smith waited longer than Ramsay. Their statues on the Royal Mile, unveiled in 1995 and 2008 respectively, have solidified their credentials as leaders of the Scottish Enlightenment and stamped Edinburgh as the centre of it. Robert Fergusson waited longest of all. He died in 1774 and was graced with a statue in the Canongate in 2004 (230 years later). Once compared, it is clear that in the nineteenth century Edinburgh was in no rush to remember its most prolific literary and philosophical associations, treating the culture of the previous century almost as an afterthought (Scott excluded) in favour of

politicians, royalty, and the dead of the Napoleonic wars. It is bitterly ironic that memorials were erected while the city was going bankrupt and the Old Town crumbled to the ground.⁴³ When Victoria visited Edinburgh in 1850 she proceeded through the same route taken by Mary, Queen of Scots and James VI. The old Edinburgh she witnessed would have contrasted starkly with the views of her predecessors. The rate of buildings collapsing was so alarming since the exodus of the upper classes earlier in the century that they were often fatal, as was the case in 1854 when a section of the Town Wall collapsed and killed several passers-by.⁴⁴ But the eighteenth-century and the Edinburgh of Allan Ramsay was most effectively forgotten in two final acts of self-portraiture.

The first concerns the definition of 'old' itself. In 1886 Edinburgh hosted the International Exhibition in the Meadows. These events were held around the globe: beginning with London in 1851 and revolving between cities such as Dublin, New York, Paris, and Melbourne before eventually reaching Scotland in 1886.⁴⁵ There were sections for Industry, Science, and Art, but most curious of all was 'Old Edinburgh Street': a reconstruction of famous 'old' buildings from Edinburgh's past no longer standing. The result would have been most novel. To say the least, the layout of the street took certain liberties with historical fact. The Tolbooth and Netherbow Port were the main features of the reconstructed street. Mary of Guise and Symson the Printer had become neighbours in a compression of space that was an elision of the cultural memory of the city with a gaze into the fantastical. The next two International Exhibitions followed this new mode of reliving the past: Manchester 1887 featured 'Old Manchester and Salford' while Glasgow 1888 featured an 'Auld Toun' and a fully reconstructed Bishop's Palace which visitors poked at curiously with umbrellas. In eighteenth-century Scotland, throwbacks to the 'old' Catholic age would not have been tolerated by many.⁴⁶ In July 1891 a Heraldic Exhibition was held in the National Portrait Gallery during which time royal arms, seals, book bindings, and even playing cards were put on display.⁴⁷ This appetite for a largely medieval Edinburgh had even become manifest on the local buildings. As Richard Rodger states: 'within a decade [of Ruskin's lecture in Edinburgh, 1858] stone inscriptions had begun to appear, and from the late 1870s until 1890 heraldic shields were common additions to the external decoration of property.'⁴⁸ The act of doing this peaked, unsurprisingly, around 1888, such was the potency the International Exhibition. The general

feeling around ‘old’ had been cemented. The eighteenth century was being built over with reconstructed memories of an even older age.

The second example of Edinburgh’s reimagining of its past occurred much more recently. As stated above, the capital became the first UNESCO City of Literature in 2004.⁴⁹ In the same year, a new statue commemorating Robert Louis Stevenson was unveiled.⁵⁰ Since then, the pairing of Stevenson with Edinburgh’s literariness has been extraordinarily pronounced. In 2007, the One Book – One Edinburgh campaign was launched. The intended participatory element taking place at literary events during a set period of time is particularly interesting in the discussion of cultural memory, wherein the past is remembered en masse. In the inaugural year, Stevenson’s *Kidnapped* was the focus. In the following years it was his *Jekyll and Hyde* and Conan Doyle’s *The Lost World*. These events lasted for around three months during which time tens of thousands of books were printed for use in schools and book groups.⁵¹ The success of these events led to the establishment of RLS Day, taking place every year since 2012 on his birthday (13 November). There are obvious echoes of Burns Night here, which, though comparatively corporate in its approach, deserves credit for the positive impact it has on young readers especially. John Corbett has described these Edinburgh campaigns in terms of a narrative arc of individual, book group, city, nation, planet.⁵² This ‘collective gaze’, as he names it, reminds us of the unique group dynamic that comprises the process of *forming* cultural memories while also recalling them. It is no surprise that Stevenson, who after all was born in Edinburgh, was the fixation of the UNESCO activities. Brian Lavoie’s study into the presence of Scottish texts in global holdings (2013) shows Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* as the leading Scottish text held in libraries worldwide, beating Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* by over 10,000.⁵³ If there was ever a statistic needed for the marketability of popular Victorian literature eclipsing the determined light of the eighteenth century then this is it.

EDINBURGH AS A CITY OF FORGETTING

Stevenson’s oeuvre takes the reader to the seven seas and back to his hometown. In *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (1879) Stevenson steeps the reader in the Old Town, dramatically setting the ‘ancient and famous metropolis of

the North in one of the vilest climates under heaven.’⁵⁴ Intriguingly, he then reflects on the aura which Edinburgh seems almost drenched in, no doubt invoked by a century-long process of mass statue-building and honorary naming. ‘The character of the place,’ he explains, ‘is often most perfectly expressed in its associations [. . .] in this spirit [Scott] made the “Lady of the Lake” for Ben Venue, the “Heart of Midlothian” for Edinburgh, and the “Pirate” [. . .] for the desolate islands and roaring tideways of the North.’⁵⁵ In this reflective mode Stevenson had entered the territory of what would come to be known as cultural memory. The associations he describes are as loose as they are dramatic. They each represent an assumed idea about the connection between literature and place. To us, they are ‘symbols’. According to Halbwachs, these symbols are the weatherproof remains of history: ‘they are all that comes to [us] from the past.’ He goes on: ‘The same is true for every historical fact I know. Proper names, dates [. . .] occasional anecdotes or quotations, are the epitaphs to those bygone events.’⁵⁶ In other words we forget the details, and what is left can be measured as ‘the character of a place.’

To understand the past we must ask questions of these commemorations and the context in which they were set. The emergence of spatial humanities in scholarship edges us closer to this ‘character’ Stevenson described. It is therefore important to get the questions right. As Murray Pittock and I have recently posited there is a risk in failing to question the processes of memorialisation. By making assumptions about the past on behalf of it we run the risk of coming to the wrong conclusions time and time again.⁵⁷ It was Hume who dubbed his age ‘the historical age’ and Scotland ‘the historical nation.’⁵⁸ Over two centuries passed before he was immortalised in stone and now it is as though he had never left. Ramsay, together with the extent of his sociable network of cultural enterprise in the early Enlightenment, have been mostly forgotten outside academic scholarship and are only beginning to re-emerge.

In James Coleman’s *Remembering the past in nineteenth-century Scotland* (2014) one of the core questions is not who is remembered but why have certain others been forgotten?⁵⁹ In *LitLong: Edinburgh* (2015) the user can traverse an interactive map of the city, reading abstracts from literary works concerning different locations. Ramsay is missing from the list of 345 authors whose works are crucial to this geo-textual framework. However, when ‘Ramsay’ is searched for in the database the user is taken to the exact sites

hitherto mentioned.⁶⁰ Together, they offer an insight into the reception of Ramsay-associated sites and, thus, the cultural memory of Ramsay in Edinburgh. Of course, this depends on the texts readily available online. In *Edinburgh's Enlightenment, 1680–1750* (www.gla.ac.uk/edinburghenlightenment/ 2016) – being the digital map in the *Allan Ramsay and Edinburgh in the First Age of Enlightenment* project (Principal Investigator: Murray Pittock) – Ramsay's living network is located and categorised for interactivity. As the forthcoming *Collected Works of Allan Ramsay* (Edinburgh University Press) will close a gap in Ramsay scholarship, so too will interdisciplinarity continue to challenge the assumptions which colour the backdrop to Ramsay. It is difficult to disagree with Richard Rodger's statement that 'most visitors to Edinburgh encounter' a 'visual imprint' of the city through its successful blend of postcard tourism and physical, undeniable history. The stature of the Castle on the rock and the score of spires on the skyline are difficult to forget.⁶¹ Yet in the sprawl of the city and in the closes and wynds that run the length of the Royal Mile a great deal has been forgotten.

Notes

- 1 Murray Pittock, 'Ramsay, Allan (1684–1758)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2010 (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23072, accessed 29 March 2017).
- 2 Cf. Murray Pittock's *Beyond Text* project 'Robert Burns: Inventing Tradition & Securing Memory, 1796–1909' (projects.beyondtext.ac.uk/research.workshops.php?i=47) & Ann Rigney's book *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (2012).
- 3 For instance, *Burns Now* (1994), edited by Kenneth Simpson features as its cover a likeness of the Bard in front of computer screen with the first lines of 'Ae Fond Kiss' loading up. From our perspective it seems comically dated, but tells us something about the ephemeral nature of our interaction with digital content. For more on this, cf. Jerome McGann, 'Coda: Why digital textual scholarship matters; or, philology in a new key', Fraistat, N. and Flanders, J. (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 274–288.
- 4 The Inaugural Allan Ramsay Festival in 2016 has helped promote his works, with healthy press coverage in the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-37565081); *The Times* (www.thetimes.co.uk/past-six-days/2016-09-20/scotland/toast-to-scots-poet-who-inspired-burns-tgxg99k9n); and *The National* (www.thenational.scot/culture/14871703.Profile.Celebrate.the.work.of.father.and.son.poets.the.Ramsays/).
- 5 Canmore site 52247: canmore.org.uk/site/52247.

- 6 Depending on whether the 'completion' is taken to mean that of the monument (1844) with/without the marble statue of Scott (1846), either date is used. See Canmore site 74114: canmore.org.uk/site/74114.
- 7 Image: www.arbycards.info/arbngo86.htm.
- 8 Fuhrer et al, 'Introduction', *Cityscaping: Construction and Modelling Images of the City* (Berlin & Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2015), 1.
- 9 See, especially, Kingsley and Long's *No Mean City* (1935).
- 10 Notes to Canmore site 111657: canmore.org.uk/site/111657.
- 11 *The Academy*, 18 June 1898, 664.
- 12 Scottish Book Trade Index entry on Ramsay: www.nls.uk/catalogues/scottish-book-trade-index/rac-reynolds.
- 13 Bruce J. Home, 'Provisional List of Old Houses Remaining in High Street and Canongate of Edinburgh,' *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* I (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1908), 1-30 (1).
- 14 The photograph of the plaque is titled 'Allan Ramsay's shop in process of demolition', item number 14071 of capitalcollections.org.uk. Artists in the late nineteenth century were well aware of Ramsay's fame, often capturing the shop in their work, as in Jane Stewart Smith's watercolour *Niddry Street and Allan Ramsay's House* (1870).
- 15 The website can be found at: www.robertburnsmemorials.arts.gla.ac.uk/.
- 16 The website can be found at: www.cityoflitterature.com/the-literary-city/read/our-literary-story/.
- 17 James Kinsley (ed.) *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, 3 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), I: 322.
- 18 The stone can be dated to c.1820. Cf. *The Kaleidoscope: or, Literary and scientific mirror* (Liverpool: 14 Nov 1820): 'A subscription was lately begun among the admirers of genius in Edinburgh [...] the tablet is now placed on the south wall of the western Greyfriars Church' (p. 158). In *Lives of Eminent Scotsmen 1: Poets* (London: 1821), the monument is described as being set in Greyfriars 'very recently' (p. 102).
- 19 Spitting in the Heart of Midlothian is an age-old street tradition and appears occasionally in the local press concerning fines for public spitting (www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/call-to-fine-people-for-spitting-in-public-1-3019580). The big toe of David Hume has also featured in regional news coverage thanks to reports of rubbing the toe bringing good luck. *The Scotsman* ran the headline 'Hume, giant of the Enligh-toement' in 2006: www.scotsman.com/news/hume-giant-of-the-enligh-toement-1-735918.
- 20 BBC website: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-29850227.
- 21 For more on the general exodus of the upper classes to New Towns across Scotland, cf. Charles McKean, 'Improvement and Modernisation in Everyday Enlightenment,' in *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland, 1600-1800* eds. Elizabeth Foyster & Christopher A. Whatley (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 51-82.
- 22 A. J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002 [1966]), 159.
- 23 *Caledonian Mercury* 21 March 1865, p. 3.
- 24 Patricia R. Andrew, 'Four Statues and a Landslip: Allan Ramsay, John Wilson, Thomas Guthrie and Charity', *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* New Series v.12 (2016), 65-82 (74).
- 25 *Caledonian Mercury*, 18 September 1863.
- 26 Jay Winter, 'Sites of Memory', *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates* eds. Susannah Radstone & Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 312-24 (312).

- 27 Iwona Irwin Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance: The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Jersey: Transaction, 1994), 47.
- 28 Christina West, 'Memory—Recollection—Culture—Identity—Space: Social Context, Identity Formation, and Self-construction of the Calé (Gitanos) in Spain', *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View* eds. Peter Meusburger, Michael Heffernan & Edgar Wunder (London: Springer, 2011), 101–19 (104).
- 29 The Hall of Heroes in the Wallace Monument was fittingly described as the 'Valhalla' in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry on the sculptor of the busts, David Watson Stevenson (www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36287).
- 30 The most celebrated of these remains the 1788 Foulis edition. For full details see Philip Gaskell's *A Bibliography of the Foulis Press* (Dorset: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1986), 379.
- 31 This edition was also noted in Patricia R. Andrew's recent article, cited above, in note 20.
- 32 Murray Pittock, 'Ramsay, Allan (1684–1758)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 201
- o [www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23072, accessed 29 March 2017].
- 33 *Lives of Eminent Scotsmen 1: Poets* (London: 1821), 102–103. Of the 'rustic temple' there is much more to say. It was seemingly octagonal, made of wood, and sheltered a few carved motifs and some lines related to Ramsay's great work. I am in the midst of collating the sources before telling the story of Ramsay's appearance in private/ semi-private settings more fully.
- 34 See note 26.
- 35 The edition was published in October 1788 (cf. note above; 26). This advert was printed in *The Oracle; Bell's New World* on 2 June 1789 with the [erroneous] date 'October 1786'.
- 36 Both found in *Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*: 'Proposal for erected a Monument to Ramsay' April 1810; 'On the Proposal to erect a Monument to Ramsay' July 1810.
- 37 Harald Hendrix, 'Making Their Mark: Writing the Poet's Grave', *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture* ed. Nicola Watson (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 13–34 [13].
- 38 *The Scots Observer* 19 January 1889, 243.
- 39 M. S. Hardcastle, 'Allan Ramsay', *Monthly chronicle of north-country lore and legend* for September 1891 (55:5), 404.
- 40 John J. Wilson, *The Annals of Penicuik: Being a History of the Parish and of the Village* (Edinburgh: T & A Constable, 1891), 172–73. There were also notable performances of *The Gentle Shepherd* in Edinburgh: Theatre Royal (1828; 1829) and the Edinburgh Festival (1949).
- 41 Ann Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 108.
- 42 The dates for the statues have been obtained from a variety of sources but especially canmore.org and *Late 18th & 19th century sculpture in the British Isles: Part 12, Edinburgh* (London: Harvey Miller Publications in association with The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1984).
- 43 Michael Fry, *Edinburgh: A History of the City* (London: Macmillan, 2009), 204.
- 44 Michael Turnbull, 'February 22nd', *The Edinburgh Book of Days* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2011).

- 45 For a fuller list see the Table of Contents in John E. Findling ed., *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851–1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).
- 46 Perilla Kinchin & Juliet Kinchin, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions: 1888, 1901, 1911, 1938, 1988* (Oxon: White Cockade, 1988), 46.
- 47 For a fuller idea of the contents of this Exhibition see the *Memorial Catalogue* by Francis James Grant (Edinburgh: T & A Constable, 1892).
- 48 Richard Rodger, *The Transformation of Edinburgh: Land, Property and Trust in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 467.
- 49 There are now twenty.
- 50 A stone plaque bearing the Stevenson's initials in Princes Street Gardens was unveiled by Muriel Spark in 1989. The statue on Corstorphine Road depicting Alan Breck and David Balfour, characters from *Kidnapped*, was unveiled in 2004. Most recently, a statue portraying Stevenson in his youth outside Colinton Parish Church was unveiled in 2013. None of these memorials are positioned in the heart of the city. The only 'central' statue is found in St. Giles' Cathedral, but this low-relief sculpture (1904) cannot form part of an argument about cultural memory concerning Edinburgh's cityscape as it resides in both a non-public (ie. fee-paying) and, more importantly, religious setting.
- 51 As is stated on the official website: www.cityoflitterature.com/about-us/projects/projects-across-years/.
- 52 John Corbett, 'Press-ganging Scottish Literature? Kidnapped and the City of Literature's One Book, One Edinburgh project,' *International Journal of Scottish Studies* 2 Spring/Summer (2007): www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue2/corbett.htm.
- 53 Brian Lavoie, *Not Scotch, but Rum: The Scope and Diffusion of the Scottish Presence in the Published Record* (Dunlin & Ohio: Online Computer Library Center, 2013), 26.
- 54 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes* (London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday, 1879), 1.
- 55 Ibid, 14.
- 56 Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 52.
- 57 Murray Pittock and Craig Lamont, 'Spatial Humanities and Memory Studies: Mapping Edinburgh in the First Age of the Enlightenment,' *Studies in Scottish Literature* 42:2 (Fall 2016), 151–63 (163).
- 58 This famous line comes from a letter written in 1770: David Wootton, 'David Hume, "the historian"', *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* ed. David Fate Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 281–312 (281).
- 59 James Coleman, *Remembering the past in nineteenth-century Scotland: commemoration, nationality and memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 4–5.
- 60 For instance, the marker in Greyfriars Kirk leads through to a snippet from the book *Royal Edinburgh* (1891), in which Ramsay's statue is described as being placed by 'the enlightened community': litlong.edina.ac.uk/search/document/529?text=ramsay&loc=1093.
- 61 Rodger, *Transformation of Edinburgh*, 459.

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